

Message Text

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67

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-05

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00 SAJ-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2314

INFO SECDEF

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 09764

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, MILL, PARM, UK, NATO

SUBJECT: NEW PRESSURES ON DEFENSE BUDGET?

1. DEFENSE SECRETARY MASON TOLD PARLIAMENT 24 JUNE THAT HE COULD NOT GIVE ANY ASSURANCES THAT DEFENSE WOULD BE EXCLUDED FROM ANTICIPATED NEW CUTS IN BRITISH PUBLIC SPENDING. AT THE SAME TIME, THE DEFENSE SECRETARY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BRITAIN'S NATO ALLIES HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY DISQUIETED DURING LAST YEAR'S DEFENSE REVIEW AND IMPLIED THAT ANY FURTHER CUTS COULD UNSETTLE BRITAIN'S NATO PARTNERS EVEN FURTHER.

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2. COMMENT: EMBOFFS HAVE BEEN HEARING INCREASING SPECULATION OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS THAT DEFENSE MIGHT BE CUT ONCE MORE AS PART OF A GENERAL REDUCTION IN PUBLIC SPENDING DESIGNED TO DAMP DOWN INFLATIONARY PRESSURES. DURING LUNCHEON AT THE EMBASSY ON 23 JUNE, THE DEFENSE SECRETARY RELATED A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER, WHICH POINTED UP THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH WASHINGTON WOULD REGARD NEW DEFENSE CUTS AND STATED THAT ANYTHING WE COULD DO TO STRENGTHEN HIS HAND IN STIFFENING MINISTERS' BACKBONES ON THIS ISSUE WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED. CLEARLY, MASON INTENDS TO PROTECT DEFENSE FROM FURTHER CUTS AND WE HAVE EVERY IMPRESSION THAT HE INTENDS TO FIGHT HARD WITHIN THE CABINET TO MAKE HIS POSITION CLEAR. WITH THE FAT APPARENTLY NEARING THE FIRE, WE WILL DO WHAT WE CAN HERE TO HELP BUTTRESS MASON'S POSITION ON THIS KEY MATTER. END COMMENT. RICHARDSON

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